— Supply of polythene sheets at subsidised cost.

— Assist growers for constuction of drying yards.

— Assist exporters in setting up-gradation of in-house laboratories.

— Assist in acquiring ISO in chilly and turmeric processing/ manufacturing units.

— Assist in adopting HACCP quality control system.

— Award of Spice House Certificate for processing units.

— Award of logo for consumer packed spices.

— Renovation of a godown of Agriculture Market Committee at Guntur.

— Strengthening of the Central Agmark Lab in Guntur

— Opening of a regional office at Hyderabad and a zonal office at Guntur.

(b) and (c) Yes, Sir. The steps taken by the Spices Board to explore new export markets for spices including Andhra chillies include participation in international fairs, promotion of Indian cuisine abroad, assisting exporters in product promotion, inviting and sending business delegations, assisting exporters in the production of brochures of international quality, conducting World Spice Congresses etc.

(d) and (e) Chillies of Andhra Pradesh as such do not have a separate identity in the international market. The marketing strategy adopted by the Spices Board is based on the pungency and colour providing strengths of Indian chillies including the chillies of Andhra Pradesh.

(f) The Board has no direct involvement in the chilly market. The activities of the Board are oriented towards improving the exports of spices including chillies.

Second Round of Negotiations of WTO

2456. SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA : Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government are aware that the second round of negotiations of WTO will be comprising Agriculture etc., which will be the most contentious issue;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, how do Government prepare themselves for such negotiations?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN) : (a) to (c) Article 20 of the WTO Agreement on Agriculture mandates further negotiations for continuing the reform process initiated during the Uruguay Round in order to achieve further trade liberalisation particularly bringing new disciplines to bear on the use of the trade-distorting domestic policies, cutting export subsidies and discipling the use of Sanitary and Phyto-sanitary Measures. As mandated these negotiations have since begun. For India an important issue is to retain the flexibility for addressing our concerns relating to food security and livelihood particularly, rural employment. Preparations in this regard are underway and relevant studies by research institutes have been commissioned and also interaction initiated with farmers' organisations, Agricultural Universities and others in various parts of the country.

Remove Quantitative Restrictions

2457. SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA : Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that under WTO agreement, India will have to remove quantitative restrictions on import of various items by April, 2000;

(b) whether it is also a fact that many of these items are reserved for the Small Scale Industries (SSI) Sector; and

(c) what are the Government plans to protect SSI units if the foreign goods will be allowed to enter India with any quantitative restrictions ?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN) : (a) Yes, Sir. Pursuant to a dispute filed by the United States of America (USA) in the World Trade Organisation (WTO) on the Quantitative Restrictions (QRs) on imports maintained by India, India and the USA have reached a bilateral agreement for the determination of a reasonable period of time for implementing the rulings and recommendations of the Dispute Settlement Body (DSB), of the WTO, which had upheld that India's QRs on imports were not justified on Balance-of-Payment (BOP) grounds. In terms of this agreement, India has lifted QRs on 714 items on 31-03-2000.

(b) Out of the 812 items reserved for the Small Scale Industries Sector, 576 were already on the OGL prior to 1-4-2000. On 31-3-2000, another 58 items from the reserved list have been placed under OGL